

Remarks/Arguments

Claims 1-55 are pending in this application. In an Office Action dated February 24, 2006, the Office has indicated that restriction to one of 12 groups of claims is required under 35 U.S.C. § 121.

Applicants hereby elect, with traverse, the claims of Group VII, *i.e.*, claims 31-39 and 53. Applicants also elect to prosecute claims 54 and 55, as amended, with Group VII. The Office has stated: "Claims 54-55 are generic and can be prosecuted with each groups I-XII to the extend of each group." Office Action, page 3, lines 13-14. Claims 54 and 55, as amended, are dependent on claim 51, a claim of Group VII. Thus, claims 54 and 55, as amended, can be prosecuted with the claims of Group VII.

Applicants expressly reserve the right to file a divisional application encompassing the claims of non-elected Groups I-VI and VIII-XII prior to issuance of this application. Further, Applicants expressly reserve the right to rejoin the claims of the non-elected Groups upon allowance of one or more of the claims of elected Group VII.

This election is made with traverse because it is believed that claims 1-55 can be regrouped into a single group. As the Examiner is aware, there are two criteria for a restriction requirement: (A) the inventions must be independent or distinct as claimed; AND (B) there must be a serious burden on the Examiner. "If the search and examination of an entire application can be made without serious burden, the Examiner must examine it on the merits, even though it includes claims to independent or distinct invention." M.P.E.P. § 803.

The Applicants believe that examining the claims as single group would not place an undue burden on the Examiner to search using the PTO's classification system since all the claims of the present application are in the same class and subclass, as admitted in the Office Action. All the claims in the suggested group are sufficiently similar to make it possible to examine these claims without serious burden, with minimal search and extensive overlap of art. The art relevant for one class is likely to be highly relevant for the other classes. Therefore, the Applicants believe that examining claims 1-55 as a single group would expedite prosecution of the present case.

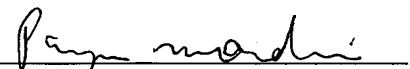
• Appl. No. 10/623,290
Amdt. dated May 22, 2006
Response to Office Action dated April 20, 2006

An action on the merits is respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,

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